

AN APOLOGY FOR JACOB
Taught by Willis E. Bishop
1987

For years and years, the only thing I heard about Jacob was that he was a thief and a cheat and a scoundrel. He stole the birth-right, swiped the cattle from Laban, argued with the Lord, and so on. I sort of bought that line of thinking. But after I got to looking into it for myself I changed my mind radically. I don't know whether Jacob can hear me this morning, but I apologize to him for what I thought for a number of years. I say to you by way of an opening statement that nowhere in the Scripture do you find any condemnation of Jacob, nor does God condemn him at any place in the Scriptures. I realize that's a mouthful, but I want to look at the account of Jacob in the book of Genesis and tell you why I changed my mind.

Genesis 25:19-26: "And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebecca to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian. And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife because she was barren. And the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebecca his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her, and she said, 'If it be so, why am I thus?' And she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her, 'Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thine inner self; and the one people shall be stronger than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger.' And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold there were twins in her womb, and the first came out red all over like an hairy garment, and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel, and his name was called Jacob. And Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them."

Apart from the immediate topic, it's interesting to note that these people had a prayer life with the Lord. In verse 21, "Isaac entreated the Lord"; and then in verse 22, Rebecca "went to inquire of the Lord."

Isaac was forty years old when he was married, verse 20, and the children were born, verse 26, when he was sixty. So they prayed about the matter, waited on the Lord for twenty years before the Lord gave them these twins. Rebecca inquired of the Lord and she was told something very important, verse 23, which will bear on a later chapter. I want to read it again in your hearing now -- the latter part of verse 23: "And the one people shall be stronger than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger."

When they were born, verse 25, "the first one came out red, all over like a hairy garment, and they called his name Esau." Then in verse 30, the latter part of the verse, "his name was called Edom." So he had two names, one Esau and one Edom. Now "Esau" means "hairy", so they called him "hairy" because he was hairy all over. And then he came out red and was called Edom which means "red." So this was "red hairy" -- he was the first one born.

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The second one, verse 26, "took hold of his brother's heel, and his name was called Jacob. Let me draw something for you: I drew those Hebrew letters as nearly alike as I could.

One is the word for "heel"; the other is the word for "Jacob." Jacob was called "Jacob" because he took hold of the heel of his brother Esau. So Jacob simply means he was a "heel-catcher." One of the minor prophets later bears that out, repeating the account that Jacob took hold of his brother's heel. Esau calls him something else in a later chapter, but we need to remember, "Edom" = "red"; and "Jacob" = "heel-catcher."

Verse 27: "And the boys grew, and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field, and Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents." I'm reading out of the King James version, and Jacob is called a "plain man." I don't know what version you are reading from, but you might find another translation of that. Here's one of the benefits of having a good concordance -- there are several concordances available, but this one I am using this morning is the Young's Concordance. If you were to look up this word "plain" in the main body of your concordance and then go to the back, you would find a table in which they show the original word in the Hebrew language and then also transliterate it for you so that an English reader can handle it. Then underneath it will tell you the different ways that particular word has been translated into the English language. In other words, they don't always translate the same Hebrew word by the same English word for some reason or other.

But if you were to take a Young's Concordance and look up the Hebrew word "tam" [pronounced "tom"], you would find it is translated nine times "perfect," two times "undefiled," one time "upright," and for some reason that I can't explain, in this one passage of Scripture it's translated "plain." I suggest to you that that's not a fair translation. In Leviticus, for example, we read concerning some of the rules of the kind of sacrifice that was to be brought, they were to bring a sacrifice without blemish, it was to be "tam" -- "perfect." In Genesis concerning Noah, he is also called a "tam" man -- "he was upright and perfect in his generation." In Job chapter 1, you will find that Job is called a "tam" man -- a "perfect" and "upright" man. Why it was translated of Jacob as "plain" I don't know.

I'm suggesting to you that the inspired Scriptures are calling Jacob the same kind of man with the same kind of character as Job and Noah. Therefore, when you proceed into the rest of the chapter and to the other chapters that deal with Jacob, you will have to remember what the Holy Spirit wrote concerning Jacob -- perfect, undefiled, upright, even as Noah.

Genesis 25:27-34: "And the boys [that is, Esau and Jacob] grew. And Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field, and Jacob was a perfect, upright man dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau

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because he did eat of his venison, but Rebecca loved Jacob. And Jacob boiled pottage, and Esau came from the field and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, 'Feed me I pray thee with that same red pottage, for I am faint.' Therefore was his name called Edom."

He's really saying, "Give this red some of that red." Verse 21: "And Jacob said, 'Sell me this day thy birthright.' And Esau said, 'Behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?' And Jacob said, 'Swear to me this day', and he sware unto him, and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils, and he did eat and drink and rose up and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright."

How often have I heard people say that Jacob gyped Esau out of his birthright; again and again and again I've heard it said. But that "ain't" so. I read it slowly, and I hope you caught the sense of what was going on here. Jacob, in verse 29, "boiled some pottage," and "Esau came from the field and he was faint, and Esau said unto Jacob, 'Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red.'" Then in verse 32 he says, "Behold I am at the point to die." I've felt that way myself sometimes when I have been hungry and my wife decides not to have anything to eat for a little bit, but I haven't died yet just from hunger, and I don't think Esau would have either. He simply wanted something to eat and didn't care for his birthright.

I want to read from some Jewish sources with regard to this transaction. These are from the various Jewish sources like the Talmudic writings, rabbinical writings, and so on: "We read in Genesis 25:29: 'And Jacob boiled pottage.' He cooked a meal. The next verse tells us that it was red pottage, showing that he was doing something that Esau, as the firstborn child, should have been doing. It was customary on a certain day of the year for the firstborn son, as the priest of the family, to seethe this red pottage and place it on the grave of Abraham."

Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein, in his Bible Comments for Home Reading, has the following to say with regard to this custom:

According to the rabbis, on that day Abraham died. [You'll notice that in verse 31 Jacob says, "Sell to me this day thy birthright."] And as the custom has ever been, the first meal after the burial is provided for by those who are not mourners themselves. This food is generally round shaped to symbolize that the wheel of death is turning around and eventually reaches everyone. Hence, Jacob had to boil the food which could not be done by his parents.

We summarize from the Jewish Talmudic writings, 'But Esau, instead of performing this duty, was off hunting, while Jacob, for the sake of the family, was doing what only the firstborn was supposed to do. No doubt Jacob was going forward with the

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work of seething the pottage hoping his brother would make his appearance later. But Esau came in from the field apparently half famished with no interest outside of satisfying the craving of his fallen carnal nature. He said, "Feed me I pray thee with this same red pottage, for I am faint." Jacob said then, 'Sell me this day thy birthright.' He might have added, 'If I am to do this in your stead, because only as the firstborn am I entitled to perform this office,' it had to be done by the firstborn, as I

understand, fasting. But Esau despised his birthright [chapter 25 verse 34] and sold it for a mess of pottage. After eating and drinking and satisfying his hunger, he rose up and went his way caring only for his own selfish pleasure and enjoyment.'

And so Jacob bought the birthright from Esau and paid for it. It was an open and honest business transaction. Gullible indeed would be he who would believe that Esau was on the verge of a hunger collapse. Within ten or fifteen minutes he could have cooked something for himself from what he had shot in the field sufficient to appease his hunger. The Word of God states, 'And Esau despised his birthright.' Jacob had respect for the promises of God while Esau despised them. Jacob was not buying fortune but seeking the blessing of the promises given to Abraham and Isaac.

Few people seem to understand that the blessing he sought was not material wealth but the right of Messianic succession. Either from Jacob or from Esau must the Messianic line run. To be the forebear of the Messiah, Jacob was ready to pay any price. So we have an exhibition of Jacob's faith and Esau's profanity. The moment Jacob had paid for his birthright it was his forever.

This is just as true as it would be in the case if you bought and paid for a title deed to a piece of property. From that time forward the property is absolutely yours. It is important to stress this, because this forms the basis which made it possible later for Jacob to say to his father, 'I am Esau, thy firstborn.' When he said this he told the truth, for he had bought and paid for the right to say so. It was Esau who had the audacity still to claim to be the older son, Esau the rascal, who only a short while before had sold the birthright and now wanted to deny the bargain. What a shiftless welcher.

So, Jacob, according to this, was doing something that Esau should have done. It was something that related to the fact that Esau as the firstborn would care for these details in the family. But he "despised his birthright" -- the last of verse 34. And Jacob was zealous for it. So, which of the two, as far as character is concerned, would you choose?

Suppose we were walking down the street and we passed a Christian bookstore, and we happened to notice a fellow come out who had

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a brand-new Bible, and he hadn't gone very far before he began to swear and to curse. And he took that new Bible and opened it and he began as though he were going to tear it apart. If you and I had any gumption about us, we'd step up and say to that fellow, "Sir, if you don't want that Bible I'll take it. If you don't love that Lord, I love that Lord. That Word is a 'lamp unto my feet and a light unto my pathway.' If you hate it, I love it. You despise it, it's my very life. Sir, I'll take that Bible."

Esau said, "What do I care for the birthright? I'm hungry. Feed me in this fast-food parlor." Jacob said, "I want the blessing of the Lord. I want to be the one who will be the head of the family when my father dies. I want, if his blessing is such, to be placed into the line of the Messiah."

Have you noticed that when God is spoken of in the Old Testament, very often it's the "God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob"? So, who's the thief and the cheat and the scoundrel? Please don't say Jacob. He loved what he was supposed to love. Esau hated what he should have wanted.

Q&A. It's pointed out that in chapter 27 he's really lying to his dad. We'll move to chapter 27 just as soon as we're finished here, so I'll handle that.

Before we go to chapter 27 I want to turn with you to Hebrews chapter 12, verse 16: "Lest there be any fornicator [you know what that is?] or profane person [a profane person is someone who is not interested in religious things, who is not holy within himself -- that's Esau] -- lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know that afterwards when he would have inherited the blessing he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance though he sought it [that is, the blessing] with tears," and we come to that in chapter 27 -- he found no place of repentance in his father Isaac -- Isaac said, "What I've done, I've done," and we'll see why later on. There you have the character of Esau pretty carefully set forth.

Genesis 27: "And it came to pass when Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau, his eldest, and said unto him, 'My son,' and he said unto him, 'Behold, here am I.' And he said, 'Behold now, I am old; I know not the day of my death.' I have done a little calculating and I think he lived some thirty or forty years after this, but he felt as though he was going to die, and maybe you and I have felt like that at some time, too. However, he lived to be 180, and he was at this time only about 131 or somewhere along in there. But he wasn't sure, his eye was dim -- that enters into the story of the chapter -- and he said, "I want to bless you before I die," verse 4: "Make some savoury meat such as I love, and bring it to me [that wasn't necessary for the blessing, but he liked it and wanted some] that my soul may bless thee before I die. And Rebecca heard when Isaac spoke to Esau, his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison and to bring it."

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Let me pause here. Isaac was about to bless Esau, but he knew better. Look back with me to chapter 25 verse 23, the last part of the verse: "the elder shall serve the younger." Isaac knew that -- he knew better than to pass those blessings on to Esau because God had said that's not the way it was to be done. We have a number of instances in Scripture where the firstborn did not receive the blessing. God had said it years before, and yet Isaac apparently forgot, and I can understand forgetting. But Rebecca had remembered, and so she sets up another plan in which she is to dress Jacob up, send him in, tell Isaac that he is there in place of Esau, that is, "I am thy firstborn Esau," and remember, Jacob had purchased the right to do that.

Now, I readily admit that they were probably taking the wrong way to get the right thing. If you ask me, "Well, what should Rebecca have done?", I have to say to you, "I don't know." But Rebecca knew that Isaac was about to make a very, very serious mistake, and so she cooked up this idea for Jacob. When Jacob brings the food to Isaac, he (Isaac) blesses him, verse 27: "And he came near and smelled the smell of his raiment and blessed Jacob." Then the blessing in part follows.

Very shortly after that, almost as soon as Jacob leaves Isaac's presence, Esau comes in. And, in verse 31, "he also had made savoury meat and brought it to his father and said unto his father, 'Let my father arise and eat of his son's venison that thy soul may bless me.' And Isaac, his father, said unto him, 'Who art thou?' And he said, 'I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau.' And Isaac trembled very exceedingly." He was scared to death. In the Hebrew it reads, "He feared a great fear unto exceeding."

The Hebrew has five words there. Isaac was scared to death. "And he said, [verse 33] 'Who? Where is he that hath taken venison and brought it to me and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? Yea, and he shall be blessed.'" I want to read that again the way I think it went: "Where is he that hath taken venison and brought it to me and I have eaten of all before thou camest and have blessed him [pause -- and the wheels were turning in Isaac's head and he realized what he had done -- he had blessed Jacob; and when that thought came to him, notice what he said], Yea, and he shall be blessed. Thank God I did the right thing after all."

C. Isaac must never have known it.

W. Known what?

C. That they were acting up with him.

W. Oh, no, Isaac did not know the plan that Rebecca and Jacob had made. And I think perhaps they took the wrong way to get the right thing. But I don't know what they should have done. I'm not commanding them for what they did. I'm simply saying that Jacob did have a right to receive what he received. When Isaac

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realized what he had done he said, "Yea, and he shall be blessed." And Isaac never blames Jacob for what he did. Nor did God. In chapter 28 we'll find that both Isaac and God bless Jacob in that very hour. So I can't see that Jacob was a thief and a cheat and a scoundrel at all.

Q. Did Isaac not know that Jacob had bought the birthright?

W. Apparently Esau never told him, and probably Jacob never mentioned it either, so that Isaac was working in ignorance from that point of view. But he should have remembered what God had said years before, "the elder shall serve the younger."

C. Isaac shouldn't have been too distressed because he already had agreed to it.

W. That's correct, and yet in verse 36 of chapter 27, "And he said, 'Is not he rightly named Jacob for he hath supplanted me these two times?'" That is Esau's complaint, but it is not true. It was a legitimate deal when Esau sold the birthright, and it was legitimate for Jacob to claim the birthright.

C. It sounds like a couple of kids exchanging baseball cards and then wanting to withdraw.

W. In fact, it gets worse than that because at the close of the chapter Esau says, "When I get my hands on Jacob I'm gonna kill him." So, Rebecca says to Jacob, "I think you had better go north for your health." And Jacob left, probably wisely so. In fact, Rebecca probably never saw Jacob again after that.

Q. Why did Rebecca put up the whole act of deceiving?

W. I do not know. I cannot tell what she should have done. Apparently she couldn't go in to Isaac and say, "Now look, Ike, you're doing the wrong thing." Apparently that didn't work. And she says, "The whole blame is on me." Some point out, though I'm not sure just exactly how to evaluate it, that Jacob was responsible for being obedient to his parents, and so he did what she said. I don't know about that.

Comment and Remarks: She's saying that Rebecca could observe what Isaac couldn't see and realized that Jacob was doing a better job of living for the Lord. Besides she knew and remembered the promise that had been made in chapter 25. I'm saying again, I do not know what Rebecca could have done; I'm not commending her for what she did do. I'm simply saying that the outcome of that whole thing is that Isaac said, "He's the one that should be blessed" -- he would not change his mind; he never blamed Jacob for what he did; God never blamed Jacob for it; and in chapter 28 you've got God approving Jacob and Isaac approving Jacob. I cannot rationalize it fully, but I do know the outcome.

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Chapter 28 -- Jacob is going to disappear to go north: "And Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him and said unto him, 'Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan-aram to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban, thy mother's brother.'

And God Almighty bless thee, make thee fruitful, multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people, and give thee [masculine singular -- Jacob] the blessing of Abraham, to thee and to thy seed with thee, that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.' And Isaac sent away Jacob."

When Jacob is leaving Isaac feels good about what he did and he blesses Jacob and gives him a messianic blessing, in fact, in verses 3 and 4. So Isaac was perfectly satisfied with the outcome of the deal in chapter 27.

Chapter 28:10: "And Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place and tarried there all night because the sun was set. And he took the stones of that place and put them for his pillows and laid down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold the Lord stood above it and said, 'I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to you [Jacob] will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, to the east, to the north, to the south, and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I, the Lord, am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest and will bring thee again into the land, for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.'"

Would the Lord say that to a thief and a cheat and a scoundrel? Never! Never. So, however we evaluate the testimony of chapter 27, it must be in light of the testimony of Isaac and especially of the Lord in chapter 28 when Jacob is fleeing from Esau.

This has nothing to do with the matter of Jacob in particular, but the stones on which he slept that night -- if you're familiar with the Stone of Scone, those who follow a certain belief of British Israelism claim that the Stone of Scone was the stone on which Jacob slept that night. Archaeologists have checked that and have found that the Stone of Scone is not indigenous to the Middle East, so that is not a correct claim.

Chapter 28:16: "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not,' and he was afraid and said, 'How dreadful is this place; this is none other but the house of God and this is the gate of Heaven.' And Jacob rose up early in the morning and took the stone that he had put for his pillows and set it up for a pillar and poured oil upon the top of it,

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and he called the name of that place 'Beth-el' [beth = house; el = God -- the house of God], but the name of the city was called Luz at at the first.

"And Jacob vowed a vow saying [notice my change here -- not "if"], since God will be with me [God had promised to do that] and will keep me in the way that I go and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on so that I come again to my father's house in peace, the Lord shall be my God. Therefore, this stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee."

Jacob is not bargaining with the Lord, he's depending upon God's promise. He's saying, "Lord, since you promised that -- since [verse 20] God will be with me, therefore, this stone which I have set up shall be God's house."

And so, the night that Jacob fled from Esau Isaac said, "Good boy"; God said, "I am with you -- I'm going to go with you, I'm going to take care of you; I'm going to bring you back." Again, whatever you might think of chapter 27, we must read it carefully in light of what Isaac and the Lord said in chapter 28. No thief, no cheat, no scoundrel -- an upright man according to chapter 25.

Q. "If your brother's hungry give him to eat" -- couldn't Jacob have done that without any question?

A. He could have, except that there was more than just something to eat involved. This was something Esau was supposed to be doing in connection with his lineal descendency from Abraham and Isaac. It was a responsibility. Jacob was not just cooking a meal -- Jacob was cooking something which the firstborn should have been doing but despised doing. Just as you and I would say, "I'd like that Bible since you despise it," Jacob said to Esau, "Since you do not care for the blessing of God I'd like to have it."

Question of firstborn and younger.

A. The firstborn was head of the family after the father died, and also had the right to the blessing of the messianic line. However, in a number of cases that was not the way it happened. For example, David was in the messianic line, but he was way down near the end of the children of Jesse. God did not always follow that particular pattern, but that was the normal pattern. Esau despised that responsibility and Jacob said, "I'll take it if I count on the Lord that way."

Q. Wasn't that true of Ephraim and Manasseh?

A. Yes, they lost their birthright to Judah -- II Chronicles 5.

Q. Doesn't this show God's grace? We're saved by grace.

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A. We're saved by grace and not by works. Indeed, it ran all the way through here.

The last time we looked at the chapter where Jacob, I think fairly, secured the birthright, and we also looked at the time when Jacob had to leave home because of the hatred of Esau. I wonder why at the time Isaac told Esau to go out to get venison and said that he would receive the blessing Esau didn't tell Isaac that he had sold his birthright to Jacob. Apparently he did not do that and was going to keep the blessing if he could.

Then we looked at chapter 28 where the Lord appeared to Jacob on his way to Haran and said, "I'm with you. I'll go there, I'll take care of you there, and I'll bring you back again." I repeat what I said last week, I personally do not find anywhere in the Scripture where God condemns Jacob. I find that a careful viewing of the circumstances give him a good record. Let's go on to Genesis 29. I'll read a number of verses and make some remarks.

Genesis 29:1: "Then Jacob went on his journey and came into the land of the people of the East [this is between 400 and 600 miles away from home]. And he looked and behold a well in the field, and lo there were three flocks of sheep lying by it, for out of that well they watered the flocks, and a great stone was upon the well's mouth. And thither were all the flocks gathered, and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth and watered the sheep and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in its place. And Jacob said unto them, 'My brethren, whence be ye?' And they said, 'Of Haran are we.' And he said unto them, 'Know you Laban, the son of Nahor?' And they said, 'We know him.' And he said unto them, 'Is he well?' And they said, 'He is well, and behold Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep.' And he said, 'Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together; water ye the sheep and go and feed them.' And they said, 'We cannot until all the flocks be gathered together and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth. Then we water the sheep.'"

Apparently the folks who were taking care of the sheep were young boys and they did not have strength enough to roll that stone away from the well, and so they had to wait until there were enough folks there to do it.

Verse 9: "And while he spake with them [and its masculine in the Hebrew, so those he was talking to were boys or men], Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she kept them." Apparently at this point Laban did not have any sons. Before Jacob leaves twenty-one years later he does have, but here apparently the girls are taking care of the sheep.

Verse 10: "And it came to pass when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near and rolled the stone from the

well's mouth and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.
And Jacob kissed Rachel and lifted up his voice and wept."

Lest you get the idea that Jacob was a fresh upstart here going around kissing the girls, this is not what indicated here. I need to speak just a little bit technically. If you read that in the Hebrew: "And Jacob kissed" -- if you had just the plain word "Rachel" as a direct object, that would mean that he kissed her as you think he might have kissed her. But the word "Rachel" has in front of it a "lam'ed", a preposition, which moves it away from the direct action, and I would guess, and I think you'll find that Hebrew authorities would agree, that he was not smooching her but he perhaps kissed her on the hand. It was no direct kiss. And then, "he lifted up his voice and wept" for joy, apparently.

Verse 12: "And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother [that is, related] and that he was Rebecca's son, and she ran and told her father. And it came to pass when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob, his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things." "All these things"? Probably concerning Rebecca, that Rebecca had sent him, the hatred of Esau, and that he was here for his health -- something like that.

Verse 14: "And Laban said unto him, 'Surely thou art my bone and my flesh.' And he abode with him the space of a month. And Laban said unto Jacob, 'Because thou art my brother [that is, relative] shouldst thou therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall thy wages be?' And Laban had two daughters."

Now, Jacob was not lazy -- he was industrious. When we come to chapter 31 I'll prove that again. "The name of the elder was Leah and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender-eyed [or you may have a translation that might even read "beautiful," or you might have a translation that reads "weak" -- the meaning of the word is somewhat open to question. My guess is that she had eyes that were not as clear in color, that is, dark colored, and therefore not as attractive perhaps as Rachel's] and Rachel [verse 17] was beautiful and well favored.

And Jacob loved Rachel and said, 'I will serve thee seven years for Rachel, thy younger daughter.'" He had no dowry, you remember -- he had left home apparently without much of anything. "I don't have anything to give for her, but I'll work for seven years for her."

Verse 19: "And Laban said, 'It is better that I give her to thee than that I should give her to another man. Abide with me.' And Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed unto him but a few days for the love he had for her. [That's not the mark of a bad man, is it?] And Jacob said unto Laban, 'Give me my wife for my days are fulfilled that I may go in unto her.' And Laban gathered

together all the men of the place and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening that Laban took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob." Of course, the girl would be veiled, it would be in the evening, and Jacob would not know the difference.

Verse 24: "And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid. And it came to pass that in the morning behold it was Leah. And Jacob said to Laban, 'What is this thou hast done unto me? Did not I serve with thee for Rachel? Wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?'"

Now let me ask you -- who's a heel here in this particular situation? I think if I had been in that situation, instead of saying to Laban, "What have you done to me?", I'd say, "Look at what I'm going to do to you." It must be noticed also that Jacob never rebuked Leah at all. And he stayed by his bargain.

Verse 26: "And Laban said, 'It must not be done so in our country to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfill her [seven] week and we'll give thee this one also for thy service that thou shalt serve me yet seven other years. And Jacob did so and fulfilled [Rachel's] week. And he gave Rachel his daughter to wife also.'" So there you have what I think is the trickery of Laban with regard to the wives of Jacob. We have an insight here into the character of Laban, and we'll see more of that later on.

Then there are the children that are born to Jacob. I'll just point those out. In verse 32 there is Reuben, the firstborn. The last word in verse 33 is Simeon, number two. In verse 34 is Levi, number three. In verse 35, toward the end of the verse, you have Judah, number four.

Let me pause there for a moment. Remember, in the case of the blessing given by Isaac, the blessing went to Jacob even though he was not the firstborn. That's also true of Judah -- he's the fourth-born. In I Chronicles 5:1,2, we find that Judah is the one who comes into the line of the Messiah. As I indicated last week, it was not always the firstborn that was chosen for the line of the Messiah. In this case it's Judah, number four.

In chapter 30, verse 6, the last word is Dan, number five; in verse 8 is Naphtali, number six; in verse 11 is Gad, number seven; in verse 13 is Asher, number eight; in verse 18 you have Issachar, number nine; in verse 20 is Zebulon, number ten. In verse 21 Dinah shows up, the one girl. There may have been other girls in the family -- chapter 37 rather infers that -- but we're not sure. Dinah is the only one named and may have been the only one. In verse 24 Joseph is number eleven. Those are the children born to Jacob while he is in Haran. Later on Rachel gives birth to Benjamin, chapter 35, and she dies in giving birth to Benjamin, number twelve. Those sons then become the twelve tribes of Israel.

Genesis 30:25 -- I want you to notice Jacob's concern: "And it came to pass when Rachel had borne Joseph that Jacob said unto Laban, 'Send me away that I may go unto mine own place and to my country. Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served thee and let me go, for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.' And Laban said unto him, 'I pray thee, if I have found favor in thine eyes, tarry, for I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake.' And he said, 'Appoint me thy wages and I will give it.' And Jacob said unto him, 'Thou knowest how I served thee and how thy cattle was with me, for it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude, and the Lord hath blessed thee since my coming. And now when shall I provide for mine own house also?'" I can understand that -- eleven sons and one girl, two wives, and nothing to provide for them. Jacob was definitely concerned.

And then he answers in verse 31: "And Laban said, 'What shall I give thee?' And Jacob said, 'Thou shalt not give me anything. [I like that again in the character of Jacob.] If thou wilt do this thing for me I will again feed and keep thy flock. I will pass through all thy flock today, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle and all the brown cattle among the sheep and the spotted and speckled among the goats, and of such shall be my hire.'

[Verse 35] And he removed that day the he goats that were ring-straked and spotted and all the she goats that were speckled and spotted and everyone that had some white in it and all the brown among the sheep, and he gave them into the hand of his sons [Laban did that]. And he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks."

So Jacob says, "I'll tell you what I'll do. We'll start out from zero. But all those that come spotted and speckled and brown will be my hire." But Laban takes those that are to be the kind of Jacob's hire and, in verse 36, he removes them three days' journey away. All Jacob has left is the kind which "ain't" his pay. Do you follow that? Jacob has the white ones to take care of and the others that might have intermixed with them and reproduced are now removed -- the kind Jacob was supposed to get -- they were three days away and there's no chance for reproducing that kind. That's Laban's idea of playing fair.

Let me show you some of the rest of Laban's dealings. Turn to chapter 31, beginning at verse 38. I want to start at the end of the story and move back. After a while Jacob comes to his two wives and says, "Look, your dad hasn't been treating me fairly." And his two wives agree. So they all say, "Let's just pick up and leave with what we've got." They all agree to that. So they leave one time when Laban happens to be gone, and Laban chases them. He finally catches up with them, and now this is a part of the conversation between Laban and Jacob after Laban catches up with them.

Chapter 31, verse 38 -- Jacob is speaking: "This twenty years have I been with thee. Thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast

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their young and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee, I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Thus I was in the day the drought consumed me, in the frost by night, and my sleep departed from mine eyes. [Taking care of the sheep was not an easy job.] [Verse 41] Thus I have been twenty years in thy house. I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, six years for thy cattle, and [this is what I'm after] thou has changed my wages ten times."

Verse 42: "Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the fear of Isaac had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen my affliction and the labor of my hands and rebuked thee yesternight." The fact is, when Laban was chasing Jacob, God appeared to him one night and said, "Don't you lay a hand on Jacob or I'll spank you real good." And Laban was afraid to do that, so he approached Jacob in a decent manner when he caught up with him. So God had a part in all of this, and I want to show you that.

Chapter 31, verse 1: "And he heard the words of Laban's sons saying, 'Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory.' And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and behold, it was not toward him as before. And the Lord said unto Jacob, 'Return unto the land of thy fathers and to thy kindred, and I will be with thee.'

"And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock and said unto them, 'I see your father's countenance that it is not toward me as before, but the God of my father hath been with me, and ye know that with all my power I have served your father, and your father hath deceived me and changed my wages ten times; but God permitted him not to hurt me. If he said thus, "The speckled shall be thy wages," then all the cattle bare speckled. And if he said thus, "The ringstraked shall be thy hire," then bare all the cattle ringstraked. Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father and given them unto me. And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived that I lifted up mine eyes and saw in a dream, and behold the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ringstraked, speckled and grisled. And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream saying, "Jacob." And I said, "Here am I." And he said, "Lift up now thine eyes and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ringstraked, speckled and grisled, for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. I am the God of Bethel where thou anointedst the pillar and where thou vowedst a vow unto Me. Now arise, get thee out from this land and return unto the land of thy kindred."'"

Whatever you make of Jacob and his caring for the cattle, and we haven't looked at all of the details, the testimony of the Scripture is clear that God moved on the reproduction of the cattle and gave Jacob his proper pay for twenty-one years of service. So I do not

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see in this account of the dealings with Laban anything of a thief or a cheat or a scoundrel in the character of Jacob.

Q. What about these things around the waterhole that Jacob was always putting in before the cattle so they could see? Can you explain that?

A. Chapter 30 and verse 36: "And Laban set three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks. And Jacob took him rods of green poplar and of hazel and chestnut tree and peeled white strokes in them and made the white appear which was in the rods, and he set the rods which he had peeled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink. And the flocks conceived before the rods and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled and spotted. And Jacob did separate the lambs and set the faces of the flocks toward the ringstraked."

Some have understood that to mean that Jacob was moving on a principle of prenatal influence; that is, whatever the cattle saw they would reproduce. And so when they saw ringstraked, spotted and speckled they would reproduce that particular kind -- prenatal influence.

I think science has reasonably well established that there is no such thing as a prenatal influence. If Jacob were operating on that particular principle he was wrong. However, if you'll look again at chapter 31, verses 10-12, you'll find that God was saying what He was going to do with regard to the reproduction. So I don't find God blaming Jacob for whatever he did. Whether he was thinking that it was a prenatal influence or not, it may have simply been in obedience to God. I do not know for sure.

C. I think that this bears out the fact that we as human beings a lot of times try to help God accomplish His purposes.

A. Perhaps that is true in this particular case. If Jacob were using it as prenatal influence he was wrong. It is certainly true that God didn't need any help in doing what He was doing in connection with the reproduction of the cattle.

This has nothing necessarily to do with Jacob's character, but I want to close with chapter 31 again, verse 43:

"And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, 'These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine, and what can I do this day unto these my daughters or unto their children which they have born? Now, therefore, come now, let us make a covenant, I and thou, and let it be for a witness between me and thee.'

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"And Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar. And Jacob said unto his brethren, 'Gather stones'; and they took stones and made a heap, and they did eat there upon the heap. And Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed [they were speaking in Aramaic and in Hebrew]. [Verse 48] -- And Laban said, 'This heap is a witness between me and thee this day.' Therefore, the name of it was called Galeed, and Mizpah, for he said, 'The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another.'"

The "Mizpah benediction" -- "The Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from the other."

I used to attend a church where the young people always used this as the benediction. I use that wording myself because I think it is beautiful. But in the context that is not so. Here were Jacob and Laban glaring at each other across a pile of stones saying, "We can't trust each other, and therefore we must let the Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from the other." So, if you use that, you ought to use it with a different thought in mind. I do use it in my praying and in other ways, and I like the idea. When we leave this morning, I trust that the Lord will watch between you and me while we're absent one from the other. But it's not in the sense of glaring at each other as in the case of Laban and Jacob.

Q. Don't you think that the years of hardship more or less were retribution for all that Jacob did back there?

A. I wondered whether someone might say that. I definitely do not, because I don't think Jacob did all that back there that people blame him for. They also say that concerning his two wives and the treatment of Laban -- "Jacob deserved it." No, he didn't. That's what I'm trying to show to you. The biblical record doesn't show anything like that. God does not condemn him, and I don't think his hardships were at all as a payment for what he did earlier in his life. If that's true, what about the hardships I'm going through or that you're going through? Are they God's retribution for what we have done? No, indeed.

Q. Don't you think God is letting Jacob go through these things to draw him closer to Himself?

A. I do think so, yes. And I think that the last lesson we'll look at will show this. I may say this next week, but the meeting and the wrestling of Jacob and the Lord is not Jacob's conversion experience. Here Jacob gives God the credit for the reproduction of the cattle, he talks it over with his wives. He had bought fairly the birthright, and I insist on that. It is something Esau despised. When you read commentaries and hear sermons, nobody ever blames Esau for anything -- they always blame Jacob -- and I think it's exactly the opposite.

Q. I have heard that the name "Jacob" means "cheat."

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A. That is a very common belief, that's why I'm taking time to go through the Scripture on Jacob. It does not mean "cheat" -- it is simply the word for "heel." When Esau complained to Isaac after Isaac had blessed Jacob, he said, "Didn't I tell you that he supplanted me twice?" In other words, he uses the word "Jacob" in the verb form saying, "He put his heel on me twice." But that was Esau's complaint -- that wasn't really Jacob's character. "Jacob" does not mean "cheat" unless you read that into the character of Jacob. It means "heel catcher" or "supplanter." You must let the rest of biblical testimony tell you which way to go in connection with that word.

Q. Would you mind reading Hosea 12:2. I just happened to see it -- it mentions about punishing Jacob.

A. Let me back up to Hosea 12:1: "Ephraim feedeth on wind and followeth after the east wind." Jacob had twelve sons, and to each of those sons was given an allotment, except in the case of Joseph, who didn't get an allotment, and in his place his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were each given an allotment. Levi also did not get an allotment because that was the tribe that would minister in the tabernacle.

So you start with twelve, you subtract Joseph; that gives you eleven. You add Ephraim and Manasseh; that gives you thirteen. You subtract Levi, and you're down to twelve. Those are the twelve divisions that moved into the land under Joshua. Ephraim was the largest and the nearest to Jerusalem of the tribes when they separated into the ten northern tribes and the two southern tribes. Very often the entire ten northern tribes are known by the name of Ephraim -- and that is what Hosea 12:1 refers to -- he's not talking about the man Ephraim -- he's talking about the ten northern tribes.

The reason for that is in the last verse of chapter 11: "Ephraim compassed me about with lies and the house of Israel was deceived; but Judah yet ruleth with God, who is faithful with His saints. Ephraim feedeth on wind," and Hosea is pronouncing a judgment on Ephraim, the ten northern tribes, in verse 1 of chapter 12: "they make a covenant with the Assyrians and oil is carried into Egypt.

"The Lord also hath a controversy with Judah and will punish Jacob according to his ways." He's talking there, not about the man Jacob, but about the nation. "According to his doings will he recompense him." Then he mentions the person of Jacob having power with God, verses 3-5; so, the punishment of Jacob in verse 2 is for the nation and not the person.

Genesis 32:1: "And Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him."

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I love that verse. I've been trying to tell you that Jacob is not the thief and the cheat and the scoundrel that has been the popular portrayal of him. As we indicated in earlier lessons, I really feel that he legitimately bought the birthright from Esau -- Esau despised it and Jacob loved what God had in promise for him -- and I don't think you dare fault him on that -- God never did. Whatever you think of Isaac's blessing, that he perhaps took the wrong way to get the right thing, you remember that Isaac when he became aware of what he had done said, "Yea, I've done the right thing." And the night that Jacob fled from the threat of Esau God met him and the angels of God ascended and descended, and God said to him, "I'm going to go with you, I'm going to be with you where you are, and I'm going to bring you back again," and God wasn't saying that to a thief and a cheat and a scoundrel.

Whatever you make of the problem of the cattle, remember that God said, "I saw what Laban did to you. He changed your wages ten times, and I am the one who caused the cattle to conceive as they did, and therefore you're getting your hire." I don't find anywhere, either Old Testament or New, where God faults Jacob in this regard. He is pleased just a little later and for the rest of the Bible to be called the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.

Now Jacob goes back to the land, and as he goes, verse 1, "the angels of God met him." A thief, a cheat, a scoundrel? Not on your life!

Verse 2: "And when Jacob saw them he said, 'This is God's host,' and he called the name of that place Mahanaim [that's a dual form of the Hebrew meaning two hosts or two bands]. And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom."

The last time Jacob had any contact with Esau, Esau had said, "If I get my hands on him I'll kill him." Now word comes that Esau is on his way to meet him. In your Bible geography, you find that Esau was coming about 90 to 100 miles away from his home territory to meet Jacob. What would be most natural for Jacob to think? -- "He's now going to carry out that threat that he made twenty-one years ago." That would be what Jacob was thinking.

Verse 4: "And Jacob commanded them saying, 'Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau, 'Thy servant Jacob saith thus, 'I have sojourned with Laban and stayed there until now, and I have oxen and asses and flocks and menservants and womenservants, and I have sent to tell my lord that I may find grace in thy sight.'" And the messengers returned to Jacob saying, 'We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee with four hundred men with him.' This re-emphasized in the mind of Jacob the threat that you read back in chapter 27.

Verse 7: "Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed, and he divided the people that was with him and the flocks and the herds and the camels into two bands. And he said, 'If Esau come to one company and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.'" You see what he was doing -- he was dividing his group hoping that at least a part of them would escape the wrath of Esau.

Verse 9 -- now listen to this of a man who is depending upon God: "And Jacob said, 'O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which said unto me, "Return unto thy country and to thy kindred and I will deal well with thee," I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant, for with my staff I passed over this Jordan [that is, that's all I had], and now I am become two bands [that is, this whole gang that's come back -- I went over with nothing, I've come back full]. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him lest he will come and smite me and the mother with the children. And thou hast said, "I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea which cannot be numbered for multitude."

"And he lodged there that same night and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother, two hundred she goats, twenty he goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milk camels with their colts, forty kine and ten bulls, ten she asses and ten foals. And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove of them by themselves, and said unto his servants, 'Pass over before me and put a space between drove and drove.' And he commanded the foremost saying, 'When Esau my brother meeteth thee and asketh thee saying, "Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee?" Then shalt thou say, "They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau, and behold also he is behind us.'"

You see what he was doing? He was taking a part of his flock and sending it ahead as a gift to Esau trusting that when Esau received that he might feel a little more kindly toward Jacob and spare him and his family.

Verse 19: "And so commanded Jacob the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves saying, 'On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau when ye find him. And say ye moreover, "Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us.'" [Now watch how I read the rest of verse 20.] For he said to himself, 'I will appease him with the present that goeth before me and afterward I will see his face. Perhaps he will accept me.' So went the present over before him and he himself lodged that night in the company. And he rose up that night and took his two wives and his two womenservants and his eleven sons and passed over the ford Jabbok. [You see, Jacob drove a Ford.] And he took them and sent them over the brook and sent over what he had." Now, he sent them on before him and he stayed behind. But that was not because he was afraid or that he was trying to push them

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to the front. When you come to chapter 33, verse 3, "Jacob passed over before them and bowed himself to the ground" when he came to Esau. He was simply staying behind that particular evening before he met Esau.

Q. Why would Jacob call Esau "lord"?

A. The word "lord" is used in two different senses in the Scripture. One is as you and I would speak to each other as "sir". It is not lord with a capital "L," that is, in the place of God. You'll find that's true in the New Testament as well. "Adonai" [Hebrew] in the Old Testament and "Kurios" [Greek] in the New Testament are used when speaking to someone out of respect. But they are also words used for the God of Heaven. Here Jacob is speaking to Esau as "sir" in a respectful manner.

Now we come to verse 24: "And Jacob was left alone. And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of day." Hosea 12, verse 3, reads: "Jacob took his brother by the heel in the womb." When we were in chapter 25 you will remember I showed you that the word "Jacob" and the word "heel" have the same consonants in the Hebrew, and Jacob was called Jacob because he was a heel-catcher -- he caught hold of Esau's heel when they were born. Now Hosea 12:4: "Yea, he had power over the angel and prevailed. He wept and made supplication unto him." So, this man of Genesis 32 verse 24 is said in Hosea 12 verse 4 to be the angel. Back in Genesis 32 verse 30, after this is all over, Jacob says, "I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved." Jacob that night wrestled with God in the form of an angel.

In the Scripture there are many, many angels of God, myriads of them, thousands of them. But there is also in Scripture a personage that appears called "the angel of the Lord." In the King James Bible we have trouble with this, and therefore I warn you to be very careful. You need a Bible which pays attention to the definite article in the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. Unfortunately, the King James Bible doesn't always do that. Remember, there are angels and there is "**the** angel of the Lord" -- they are two different things. For example, in the story of the birth of Samson in Judges 13, the angel of the Lord appears to Manoah and to his wife to announce the birth of Samson. We find there that that angel is identified as God. In fact, his name is called Wonderful. Isaiah 9:6 says of the Lord, "... he shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." All the way through the Old Testament, if you're using the right Scripture, "**the** angel of the Lord" is God. But interestingly enough, when Christ is born in Bethlehem "**the** angel of the Lord" disappears from Scripture and never appears again. I'm suggesting to you for that reason plus others that "**the** angel of the Lord" in the Old Testament is the preincarnate Christ, He is Christ before He becomes born of flesh in Bethlehem.

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So here Jacob is wrestling with the preincarnate Christ. The question is, why?

Back to verse 24: "And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a man [the angel of the Lord] with Jacob until the breaking of the day. And when the angel saw that he prevailed not against Jacob, the angel touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as the angel wrestled with Jacob." They wrestled all night and Jacob was winning. Then the angel reaches out and touches Jacob's thigh, and that ends the wrestling match. I can appreciate that a little, and I'll tell you just a little about my teenage years.

When I was a teenager, there was a famous wrestler named Strangler Lewis, and I must say that in that day wrestling matches were wrestling matches. The shows on the television today are a sham and a cheat -- they're not wrestling matches. But back then they were man against man. Strangler Lewis published a series of lessons on wrestling. I didn't have very much money, but I thought it would be a good idea to invest in that, so I sent off for the lessons, and a number of them came until I ran out of money. So I've had only a few wrestling lessons. But I know what it means to make a bridge with your back, and to use your legs in wrestling. When the angel touched Jacob's thigh and threw it out of joint, that finished Jacob.

Verse 26: "And the angel said, 'Let me go for the day breaketh.' And Jacob said, 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me.' And the angel said unto Jacob, 'What is thy name?' And Jacob said, 'Jacob.' And the angel said, 'Thy name shall be called no more "Jacob," but "Israel," for as a prince thou hast power with God and with men and hast prevailed.'"

A couple of things there. There is some difference of opinion as to just where the name "Israel" is derived from. In the Hebrew, the first characters of "Israel" are the words "to wrestle," and the "el" on the end is "God." So I think it's intended to point out this wrestling match that Jacob had with God and that "Israel" comes from that word rather than the "prince of God," although a case could be made for that as well. But the angel is saying, "As a prince thou hast power with God [and notice the rest] and with **men** and hast prevailed." Here's a little technicality in grammar.

In Hebrew [somebody will get the idea that I'm a real Hebrew scholar, and I'm not, but I want to pass this along to you], where you have some verbs in a story and you put them into a certain tense, for example the perfect tense, and then you put a little "vau" on the front of that, that can change the tense from completed action to future action. We have translated at the end of verse 28, "with God and with men and **hast** prevailed."

This is one place where you must decide whether that "vau" consecutive changes the tense or doesn't. I can't settle that --

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scholars can't always agree on that. But in the Septuagint version, which is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, you find this translated by the future, and therefore the latter part of the verse would read like this, "thou hast power with God and with man and will prevail" -- in the future. I'm only suggesting -- "Jacob, you're about to meet Esau out there. You've prayed about this; you've reminded Me about the promise I gave you that I would be with you and I would take care of you and I would bring you back safely. And now you've wrestled all night with Me and you have won until I threw your hip out of joint. Do you mean to tell Me, Jacob -- you've prevailed with God and with men -- that you won't prevail when you meet Esau? You will, Jacob, you will. But when you go out there you're going to limp. You're going to be physically incapable of doing anything to protect yourself. Who's going to do it? I am, Jacob. I'm going to take care of you."

Let me finish reading the chapter. Verse 29: "And Jacob asked him and said, 'Tell me, I pray thee, thy name.' And the angel said, 'Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?' And the angel blessed Jacob there. And Jacob called the name the place 'Peniel' [pan - face; el - God]. 'I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved.' And as Jacob passed over Penuel [that is simply the old form of spelling] the sun rose upon him and he halted [or limped] upon his thigh. Therefore, the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day, because the angel touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.'"

"Jacob, I remind you that you're not going in your own strength. I'm going to take care of you when you face Esau."

Prayer: Our Heavenly Father, we come to you and acknowledge that so often we forget Your promises to us. We somehow just don't trust You, or we forget Your Word, or we think that what we do must be in our own strength, and indeed we shall fail. Renew in us as we bow before Thee this morning the assurance that underneath are the Everlasting Arms, the promise that Thou wilt never leave us nor forsake us, the promise not only of care in this life but in the life to come. And so, as we confess our sins, we pray that Thou wilt renew our strength and our joy in serving the Lord, for we ask it in the Saviour's precious, holy name. Amen.

In chapter 33 we have Jacob meeting Esau. As far as I can see, the purpose of Jacob wrestling with the angel of the Lord all night, and winning, was to assure him that when he meets Esau he need not be afraid for the Lord was on his side. In fact, Jacob says to Esau in 33:10, "I have seen thy face as though I had seen the face of God and thou was pleased with me." So we find a pleasant meeting in chapter 33, a surprise especially to Jacob. I'll read through the

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chapter and go into the closing records of Jacob's life -- it will be rather piecemeal.

Genesis 33:1: "And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold Esau came and with him four hundred men." That's one of the things that scared Jacob quite a bit. "And Jacob divided the children unto Leah and unto Rachel and unto the two handmaids, and he put the handmaids and their children foremost and Leah and her children after and Rachel and Joseph last. And he passed over before them [in other words, he wasn't using them as a shield] and bowed himself to the ground seven times until he came near to his brother.

And Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. And Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and the children and said, 'Who are those with thee?' And Jacob said, 'The children which God hath graciously given thy servant.' Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. And Leah also with her children came near and bowed themselves. And after came Joseph near and Rachel and they bowed themselves. And Esau said, 'What meanest thou by all this drove which I met?' [That was back in chapter 32 where Jacob sent ahead of him droves of cattle after cattle after cattle to Esau.] And Jacob said, 'These are to find grace in the sight of my lord.' And Esau said, 'I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself.'

Without losing this chapter, turn with me to chapter 36 verse 6 [Genesis]: "And Esau took his wives and his sons and his daughters and all the persons of his house, and his cattle and all his beasts and all his substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan, and went into the country from the face of his brother Jacob. For their riches were more than that they might dwell together, and the land wherein they were strangers could not bear them because of their cattle. Thus dwelt Esau in Mount Seir. Esau is Edom."

We find that Esau was well off at this time and he's saying to Jacob in chapter 33:9: "I have enough my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself."

Chapter 33:10: "And Jacob said, 'Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand, for therefore I have seen thy face as though I had seen the face of God, and thou was pleased with me. Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought unto thee, because God hath dealt graciously with me and because I have enough."

"And Jacob urged him and Esau took it. And Esau said, 'Let us take our journey and let us go, and I will go before thee.' And Jacob said unto him, 'My lord knoweth that the children are tender, the flocks and the herds with young are with me, and if men should overdrive them one day all the flock will die. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant and I will lead on slowly,

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according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir. ' And Esau said, 'Let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me.' And Jacob said, 'There is no need. Let me find grace in the sight of my lord.' So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Succoth and built him a house and made booths for his cattle. Therefore, the name of the place is called Succoth." And so, as is perhaps usual in our lives, some things we fear in the future turn out to be good after all.

Now, just a few things in the close of Jacob's life -- I don't think any of them are problematic in particular, but I'll point them out to refresh "your pure minds by way of remembrance."

Chapter 33:18: "And Jacob came to Shalem [or some translations, "went safely"] to a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan when he came from Padan-aram, and pitched his tent before the city. And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money, and he erected there an altar."

Turn with me to John 4, put one finger there, and then turn to Genesis 48 -- Genesis 33, John 4, Genesis 48.

Genesis 33:19, again: "And Jacob bought a parcel of a field where he had spread his tent at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money."

In John chapter 4 I believe we read concerning that parcel of ground. This is the story of Jesus visiting with the woman of Samaria. And in verse 5 of John chapter 4, "Then cometh Jesus to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph."

Those of you who have traveled in Palestine no doubt visited, if you could, Jacob's well. Right now it is a dangerous place to visit because it's in part of the Arab territory of Israel. There are soldiers around and some tourists do not get to see Jacob's well, but perhaps you did and perhaps you drank some of that water out of that cup that a couple million people have drunk from. Or you have listened to the water as someone poured it out and counted the seconds until it hit the water at the bottom, to know that the well is indeed deep as the Samaritan woman had said. Christ sat on that well in the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

In Genesis 48:22 Jacob says, "Moreover, I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

I am sometimes a little weary with people who think they see contradictions in the Scripture. I think it's because either they

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don't trust the Scripture as the inspired Word of God or they haven't checked far enough to find the reason there are seeming contradictions, and there are none.

For example, in one case Christ ministers to one blind man and another Gospel writer says there were two blind men, so there must be an error in the Word. You know that isn't so. Two people were there, but Christ ministered to one or the Gospel writer mentioned only one of them, and that's true here.

In this case, you have Jacob buying a parcel of ground and in another case you have him taking it from the Amorite with a sword and a bow. So people say, "Oh, the Bible is in error again." I think when we get to see Jacob, if we don't get it straightened out before, we'll find that Jacob bought it and apparently the Amorites took it over and Jacob had to win it back, but it was his, and he gave it to one of his descendants. So, if you have visited Jacob's well, you have visited a very, very historic area.

Genesis 49:1: "And Jacob called unto his sons and said, 'Gather yourselves together that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days.'

I'll not go into the details of this chapter, but Jacob, in a very remarkable way, spoke about each of the tribes and things that would lie in connection with their experiences in the future. He was in a sense acting as a prophet, and his predictions came true. So I have difficulty again in seeing Jacob as a heel and a cheat and a thief and a scoundrel, even to his dying day, because of the fact that God used him in a very remarkable way to predict the things that related to the future of the tribes. I want to point out verse 10, with which you may already be familiar.

Jacob is speaking here concerning Judah. Back up to verse 8: "Judah, thou art he whom the brethren shall praise. Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee [you'll be the ruler]. Judah is a lion's whelp. From the prey, my son, thou art gone up; he stooped down, he crouched as an old lion. Who shall rouse him up? [Now verse 10] The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

Shiloh will come from Judah. We could spend one full class period discussing this matter of Shiloh, pro and con and up and down and in and out and around and about. But the simple answer to Shiloh is that it is a reference to the personal Messiah. Shiloh. All antiquity agrees to interpreting that as a personal Messiah, and it's only in recent days when scholars begin to kick it around that they doubt it. The Septuagint version understands it that way, the Targum of Onkelos, Jonathan, the Jerusalem Talmud, the ancient books of the Jews, and most conservative Christians understand this as a predi-

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tion of the Messiah coming from the tribe of Judah, "and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be."

So here's a remarkable, remarkable prophecy, some fifteen or sixteen hundred years before Christ was born, that He would come from the line of Judah. You can trace the Messiah from Genesis chapter 3 right on down and find that God is ever narrowing and ever becoming more specific concerning the person of the Messiah and His lineage -- descended from Abraham, then through Jacob, then through Judah, then through David, and right on down. When you come to the genealogies in Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 3 you find all those factors are included, and it is difficult to understand how our Jewish friends can see anything else but the Messiah in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, here's a remarkable prophecy of the coming of Christ.

Then, the closing verse of chapter 49: "And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed and yielded up the ghost and was gathered unto his people."

That gathering "unto his people" -- he wasn't buried there, so it must imply that there is a life after death and that Jacob went into that life where his people before him had gone.

Before he dies he makes a request, back to verse 29: "And Jacob charged them and said unto them, 'I am to be gathered unto my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron, the Hittite, for a possession of a burial place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah, and they buried Isaac and Rebecca his wife, and there I buried Leah.'"

If you have had the opportunity to visit Hebron, you may have visited the so-called Cave of Machpelah -- you can't get into the cave, but there is a large mosque built over the spot. It's in control of the Arabs today, but on occasions when the atmosphere is quiet in Hebron they'll allow tourists to go in. You will go through a number of rooms and come to large cenotaphs built over the cave where, at least traditionally, there are the burial places of Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebecca, and Leah and Jacob. It is quite a thrill to go in there and to realize that you're standing so close to the burial place of those who lived so long ago. That cave is closed -- there is a little opening and I'm not sure whether the Arabs ever go down there, but no one else is permitted down there. Some folks have tried to sneak down there and have just barely escaped with their lives.

About a year or so ago the "Biblical Archaeological Review" had an entire article on it and published some information on how they believe that cave was constructed below the level into which you are permitted to go. You look down through a hole in the floor and there

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is a little light in the hole, so you don't see anything but the light shining up in your eyes. At least you know you are looking down in the approximate place where these six forerunners of the faith were buried.

One other thing this morning, and this lies simply in the matter of history. Esau had his headquarters, as we looked in chapter 36, in Mount Seir, or Petra -- the red rock city of Petra. Again, if you have traveled in the Middle East, this time in the country of Jordan, you may have taken a trip to the red rock city of Petra. It's a remarkable place to visit, way out there in the middle of nowhere, way off the southern end of the Dead Sea, and there are folks down there who will rent you a horse and take you through what's called the "Siq" [pronounced "seek"] or the "Needle" into a large, large opening where Esau and his descendants lived. At one time there were as many as 260-some thousand people who lived in that area. It covers quite a period of history over which they controlled the trade routes through that section of the country. They had to go through that way and if Esau and his descendants didn't want them to go through they didn't go through.

In fact, when the children of Israel came out of Egypt they wanted to go through and Esau said, "No, you can't go through," and they had to go on south and the long way around. Today there is nothing left in particular of the buildings, but some of the buildings were carved out of solid red limestone, and those are still there. The buildings that were outside of the caves are not there any more.

With the destruction of Mount Seir, or Edom, those few Edomites that were left moved up north into the territory of Israel, so that today there are no Edomites left at all. Two of the minor prophets of the Old Testament speak concerning their disappearance. But from our point of view, biblical history is tied up in the Lord Jesus Christ with a fellow by the name of King Herod.

King Herod was a descendant from Esau -- he was at least in part an Edomite. And so we have biblically and historically the last conflict between Esau and Jacob in Christ and Herod in the period of the Gospel writings. There are no Edomites any more -- they're absorbed into other peoples, but of course Christ lives forever and ever.

Q. Which one of the sons did Ephraim and Manasseh replace?

A. That is found in Genesis 48 -- I skipped over that, but if you'd like to look at it we'll do it. Genesis 48:8: "And Jacob beheld Joseph's sons and said, 'Who are these? And Joseph said unto his father, 'They are my sons whom God hath given me in this place.' And Jacob said, 'Bring them, I pray thee, unto me and I will bless them.'"

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In verse 5 you'll notice that those two sons are Ephraim and Manasseh. They are the two sons of Joseph. When those sons stand before Jacob, Jacob crosses his hands to bless them, and Joseph says, "Now wait a minute -- don't do that" -- he's blessing the younger above the older. Jacob says, "Never mind, I know what I'm doing." Here is another illustration where a younger replaces an older one.

In the settlement of the tribes there is no tribe of Joseph, but in his place there is Ephraim and Manasseh. So Joseph does not have a tribe as such -- he's represented by the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. I might add that Levi was one of the sons of Jacob, and there is no tribe of Levi either because the Levites were chosen not to have a separate section of the country -- they had simply Levitical portions. So that, in the twelve sons of Jacob, which include Levi and Joseph, you subtract Levi and you have eleven; you subtract Joseph and you have ten; you add Ephraim and Manasseh in place of Joseph and you're back up to twelve -- the twelve tribes of Israel.

Prayer: Our heavenly Father, we thank You for simply being able to relate things concerning the Lord and His ways with us. And we realize that one of these days our Lord will come back, will establish a throne on which He will rule and reign forever. And then we will enter into some of the joys of understanding just a little better how He came and how He is coming again. Lord, today, in the midst of a world that's lost in turmoil and sin and degradation, we thank You that there is a core of righteousness in those who have believed and passed from death unto life eternal. Make this a good day as we trust in Thee, for we ask it in Jesus' precious name. Amen.